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TRUST AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The theme of trust takes up a somewhat ambiguous role in the study of international relations (IR). Trust is widely recognized as a key component of human interaction and political organization. However, despite its central concern with the relationship between actors both on an aggregate as well as on individual level, the study of trust and its role and nature has been neglected for most of IR's history of almost one hundred years. In many instances of scholarship in IR, trust has been seen, and continues to be seen, as a negligible factor either because it is deemed dangerous for actors in an internationally anarchic system to trust or, if we are specifically concerned with the problem of cooperation, because it is not deemed necessary to achieve and maintain cooperative behavior. Only recently has the number of studies that take the topic of trust as their central concern increased, and the result has been a variety of conceptually and empirically rich contributions; this scholarship draws on the rich literature of trust from disciplines as diverse as psychology, moral philosophy, and sociology. The ongoing debates about the nature, substance, and function of trust in international politics have developed along a number of different contentions. On the most basic level, the role of rationality and rational decision making in instances of trustful behavior has proved contentious. Positions here range from purely instrumental accounts to those interested in the interactive social dimension to those that see trust as either a moralistic disposition or an emotive attitude. Accordingly, the types of trust identified within the literature do not form a singular conceptual base from which to start empirical inquiries. This heterogeneous state of

affairs concerning the conceptual substance of “trust” is further confounded by questions regarding the meaning of related terms such as “confidence” and “reliability” (or “reliance”). Another important dimension of trust scholarship concerns the relation among uncertainty, risk, and trust. A widely accepted premise for the emergence (and necessity) of trust is based on the lack of certainty that pervades (human) interaction. Trust becomes possible (and for sustained and peaceful interaction necessary) only when a situation arises in which the intentions of others are unknown and in which the consequences of their actions could produce harm. This situation of risk in which action and interaction occurs under conditions of limited information is a basic condition for trustful behavior to occur. Yet, contentions remain about the actual nature of this “uncertainty”; in the majority of accounts this uncertainty is tied to limited knowledge about the other and their intentions, i.e., it is described as a form of epistemological uncertainty that arises out of specific ontological constellations. In other accounts, however, this uncertainty itself assumes a more ontological quality and perceives of human existence in general as not reducible to representational knowledge and calculable outcomes. Trust in such understandings appears as a non-articulate disposition, an emotive attitude or a set of beliefs the function of which exceeds the purely calculative dimension of trust as a response to epistemological uncertainty.

CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEWS

Many disciplines addressed trust as a subject for academic research and debate long before it made its way to the field of international relations. As with many other themes and concepts, international relations draws heavily on this preexisting literature and, to this day, the field regularly references central works outside the discipline as points of reference. One debate that is taken from this literature and mirrored in international relations broadly concerns questions of trust in the public sphere, i.e., trust in government, forms of government, and public offices more generally. O’Neill [2002](#) and Hardin [2006](#) exemplify these debates quite well. Even more broadly, other publications, including Lagerspetz [1998](#) and Lagerspetz [2015](#), investigate the various dimensions of the notion of trust and the deeply interdisciplinary character of trust research as well as aspects of the relation between trust and cooperation (Gambetta [1988](#)). Complementing these works are accounts that focus on the complex relation between trust and reason as for instance in Hollis [1998](#).

Gambetta, Diego, ed. *Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988. [ISBN: 9780631155065]

This edited volume provides a very good introduction for those new to the debates on trust. Its contributions engage more generally with theoretical and empirical matters on trust and trusting behavior. Part 1 addresses conceptual and theoretical reflections on the notion, nature, and role of trust in social relations, while Part 2 presents a number of empirical case studies.

Hardin, Russell. *Trust*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2006. [ISBN: 9780745624648]

This book addresses the question of the role of trust in the public sphere, on the one hand, and in the private sphere, on the other. It investigates to what extent a crisis exists in public trust and how this can be contextualized within a globalizing setting. It also looks at this growing interconnectedness in terms of impact on the development (and its obstacles) of trust on individual levels.

Hollis, Martin. *Trust within Reason*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998. [ISBN: 9780521583466]

This book engages with the central relationship between trust and reason, offering reflections on the paradoxes and contradiction as well as the promises trust can hold within the framework of the Enlightenment. Importantly, Hollis moves beyond a narrow understanding of reason as instrumental rationality, and, with reference to central thinkers

in the Enlightenment tradition, he shows what a wider conception of reason can contribute to our understanding of trust and its development.

Lagerspetz, Olli. *Trust: The Tacit Demand*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic, 1998. [ISBN: 9780792348740]

A comprehensive overview of the main issues and contentions surrounding the notion of trust. The book develops along interdisciplinary lines and explores a large variety of interconnected aspects reaching from the emergence of trust to its “pay-offs” to questions of trust and political legitimacy.

Lagerspetz, Olli. *Trust, Ethics and Human Reason*. London: Bloomsbury, 2015. [ISBN: 9781441169778]

This book introduces the various conceptual and theoretical dimensions that drive much of trust scholarship. The book offers an intricate, nuanced but accessible overview of the core themes and contentions related to trust in relation to both similar concepts and the conditionalities of trust (e.g., reason, vulnerability, truth). To date, one of the best general introductions to the issues surrounding the notion of trust.

O'Neill, Onora. *A Question of Trust*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002. [ISBN: 9780521823043]

This is a printed version of the BBC Reith Lectures given in 2002. The lectures address the questions fundamental to every treatment of trust in a brief yet very reflective and instructive manner: is there a current crisis of trust, how does trust emerge, on what basis is trust well placed, and what are the societal and political conditions under which trust can flourish?

TRUST AND MODERNITY

In addition to the influence of general trust scholarship in international relations, a body of literature, mostly situated in the discipline of sociology, continues to exert considerable influence on debates about trust in international relations. Sztompka [1999](#) and Misztal [1996](#) offer good examples of sociologically differentiated treatments of the role, nature, and occurrences of trust, while Seligman [1997](#) ties the notion of trust to the development of functional differentiation in modern societies. In its most influential manifestations, sociological treatments of trust specifically focus on relation and intersectionality between trust and modernity. Reemtsma [2012](#), for instance, traces the relation between trust and violence in modern society, whereas Luhmann [1979](#) provides a classic treatment of the relationship between trust and power. Bluhm [1987](#) explores the intricate relationship between trust and technology and the rise of uncertainty. Other sociological approaches provide links with related disciplines, such as psychology and political science, as, for instance, the approach found in Lewis and Weigert [1985](#). This body of literature develops highly relevant views on the role of trust as a specific response to the complexities of modern life and, as such, provides central insights valuable for the realm of international politics.

Bluhm, Louis H. “Trust, Terrorism, and Technology.” *Journal of Business Ethics* 6.5 (1987): 333–341.

This article conceives of trust as a mechanism necessary for the functioning of complex social systems. Bluhm conceives trust as comprised of two dimensions—predictability and evaluation of consequences—that subsequently form the basis for different forms of social interaction. Based on this understanding of trust, the article considers the impact of agential or structural influences, such as terrorism or technology, that increase uncertainty by decreasing predictability—this phenomenon is called “the terrorist principle.”

Lewis, J. David, and Andrew Weigert. “Trust as a Social Reality.” *Social Forces* 63.4 (1985): 967–985.

This article argues for the establishment of an integrated sociological theory of trust that links sociological research on trust with work on trust in psychology and political science. It provides a clear summary of sociological approaches on trust and develops a useful and clear typology of different kinds of trust in relation to their degree of rationality and emotionality.

Luhmann, Niklas, *Trust and Power*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1979. [ISBN: 9780471997580]

This an early treatment of trust (the German version was published in 1968) in which Luhmann examines the role of trust in modern societies within the distinction of system and environment that underwrites his most influential work in systems theory. Trust is here conceptualized as a specific response to growing uncertainty and complexity within modern social systems. Luhmann also provides a clear differentiation between familiarity and trust, the former being a precondition for the latter.

Misztal, Barbara. *Trust in Modern Societies: The Search for the Bases of Social Order*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1996. [ISBN: 9780745612485]

This book delineates the different forms of trust emerging within different forms of society by distinguishing among trust as habitus, passion, and policy. It links these appearances of trust to three different kinds of societal order: stable, cohesive, and collaborative, respectively. Additionally, the book offers a detailed discussion of the various notions of trust in contemporary scholarship, its status with respect to related terms, and its multidimensional nature.

Reemtsma, Jan Philipp. *Trust and Violence: An Essay on a Modern Relationship*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012. [ISBN: 9780691142968]

This book develops a detailed account of the complex and intricate relationship between the coercive exercise of power, on the one hand, and trust, on the other. The book treats in depth the notion of trust in modernity as well as providing wide-ranging reflections, both conceptual and empirical, on how trust and power are related and to what extent power really emerges out of trust.

Seligman, Adam B. *The Problem of Trust*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997. [ISBN: 9780691012421]

This book introduces a conceptual breakdown and differentiation between trust and related phenomena—for Seligman, specifically, confidence and familiarity, both of which he affirms should be treated as separate from trust in terms of substance and directionality. The book ties the nature and function of trust to a specifically modern setup in which functional differentiation, competing social roles, and the autonomous individual provide the reference points for our understanding trust and its function in society.

Sztompka, Piotr. *Trust: A Sociological Theory*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999. [ISBN: 9780521598507]

This contribution offers an explanatory framework for the emergence and decline of “trust-cultures” supported by an insightful case study on Poland in the last chapter. Sztompka offers a multidimensional account that allows for a more differentiated understanding of trust and offers insights into how these dimensions are complementary in bringing about manifestations of trust in modern societies.

GENERAL OVERVIEWS OF TRUST IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Given the relatively recent and rather diverse developments of trust scholarship in the field of international relations it is challenging to find general overviews that provide a summary of the various existing approaches to the study of trust, compared to contributions that take particular positions such as those outlined in this article. Ruzicka and Keating 2015 provides one of the best introductions so far, presenting both reflections on why the issue of trust has

long been neglected and also a typology that groups IR research on trust into three broad strands. A decade earlier, a book-length study, Hoffman 2006, includes discussions on the challenges of trust research in the first three chapters. For a very brief overview, Haukkala, et al. 2015 offers reflections on the key conceptual and empirical dimensions of contemporary trust scholarship in international relations.

Haukkala, Hiski, Johanna Vuorelma, and Carina van de Wetering. "Introduction." In *Special Issue: Trust in International Relations—A Useful Tool?* Edited by Hiski Haukkala, Johanna Vuorelma, and Carina van de Wetering. *Journal of Trust Research* 5.1 (2015): 3–7.

This introduction to a special issue on trust in IR provides a brief sketch of the main fault-lines and contentions in trust scholarship and includes contributions to the study. It develops the remit of trust scholarship and outlines the central questions that drive contributions by briefly addressing conceptual as well as empirical questions and potentialities.

Hoffman, Aaron M. *Building Trust: Overcoming Suspicion in International Conflict*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2006. [ISBN: 9780791466353]

This volume provides an excellent general introduction and overview of the notion of trust. Chapters 1 to 3 provide a clear and in-depth discussion of the role of trust in IR theory (specifically in relation to the inter-paradigm debate) with respect to the challenges of conceptualizing and measuring trust and the different ways in which trust relationships can be established and maintained.

Ruzicka, Jan, and Vincent Charles Keating. "Going Global: Trust Research and International Relations." *Journal of Trust Research* 5.1 (2015): 8–26.

This article provides a structured overview of scholarship on trust in IR and is one of the best general introductions to this growing field of scholarship. It traces the central contentions surrounding the role and nature of trust in international politics and develops a tripartite distinction among trust as rational choice, trust as a social phenomenon, and trust as a psychological phenomenon. It also includes reflections on future research trajectories on the issue of trust in international relations.

SKEPTICAL VIEWS ON TRUST IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

For most of its existence as an academic discipline, IR has neglected the role and function of trust. The reasons for this neglect are manifold but they rest on both empirical and theoretical grounds. Empirically, a growing sense of threat and mutual mistrust characterized the post-1945 world and the emerging Cold War. The main antagonists perceived their ontological status as defined by mutual exclusion and existential antagonism. These perceptions were not confined to the international realm; indeed, in the early years of the Cold War they also played out domestically as the McCarthy era in the United States made all too clear. The often perceived basic prerequisites of trustful behavior revolving either around shared values or common interests were denied and instead an atmosphere of hostility and mutually exclusive interests and objectives characterized the international sphere. Furthermore, as Axelrod 1984 remarks, in cases in which cooperative behavior was observed, trust was not deemed necessary for its occurrence. Theoretically and conceptually these circumstances were captured in what is known as the "security dilemma," both in its original manifestation in the work of Herz 1950 as well as in later instantiations, as, for example, in Jervis 1978. Equally, Mearsheimer 1994–1995 and Mearsheimer 2004, more recent work within the framework of structural realism, leave little room for exploration of trust in international affairs. Central contributions either implicitly or explicitly problematize the relevance and/or applicability of trust in international affairs.

Axelrod, Robert. *The Evolution of Cooperation*. New York: Basic Books, 1984. [ISBN: 9780465021215]

This book discusses the problem of cooperation in conditions of anarchy, specifically focusing on the “prisoner’s dilemma.” Axelrod treats trust as of no relevance in achieving cooperation. The book provides a clear sense of why trust has long been perceived as of little importance in international relations, and, as such, it provides one of the key starting points from which to criticize this lack of attention to trust.

Herz, John. “Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma.” *World Politics* 2.2 (1950): 157–180.

This article offers a classic discussion of the “security dilemma” in international politics. John Herz provides a historically guided assessment of the prospects of peace and cooperation by assessing the challenges and repeated failures of idealist internationalism. Although the concept and question of trust does not directly feature, Herz’s discussion of the ‘security dilemma’ provides one of the fundamental and enduring frameworks within which to analyze cooperative and conflictual dynamics in international politics.

Jervis, Robert. “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma.” *World Politics* 30.2 (1978): 167–214.

This article highlights the obstacles to cooperation under the security dilemma. It outlines the conditions for cooperation or defection in a situation of anarchy and uncertainty. Jervis links trust to levels of expected loss or gain resulting from specific actions. If the risk of loss is low or can be absorbed trust is easier to achieve; equally, in a scenario with repeated interactions past defections are likely to reduce levels of trust.

Mearsheimer, John. “The False Promise of International Institutions.” *International Security* 19.3 (1994–1995): 5–49.

This article offers a critique of much of the institutionalist literature and, concomitantly, on the prospects of cooperation linking the prominence of institutionalist thinking more to American normative tendencies than empirical realities. Mearsheimer contends that the effectiveness of institutions in achieving cooperation and trust is rather limited.

Mearsheimer, John J. “Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War.” *International Security* 15.1 (2004): 5–56.

This article specifically focuses on the prospect of peace in Europe after the end of the Cold War. It implicitly denies the efficacy or even the possibility of trust to shape policy outcomes in any important way. Drawing on central tenets of a realist perspective, Mearsheimer reiterates that, due to the anarchic order of the international system, states will seek to improve their position vis-à-vis others and that, without the somewhat stabilizing structure of the Cold War, trust is not only unlikely, but also dangerous.

TRUST AS CALCULATED OUTCOME

The major and most influential approach to the matter of trust in international relations conceives of trust as a result of a conscious decision-making process. Trust in these accounts mainly focuses on addressing the matter of epistemological uncertainty. Its central premise is the problem of “other minds,” the intentions of which remain outside the bounds of certain knowledge. Political decision makers are tasked with deciding on specific paths of action, and thus the lack of certain knowledge about the intentions and motives of others needs to be managed. Trust provides one possible strategy to address this uncertainty. Trust appears as a specific form of risk-taking in which a relationship is built around patterns that seek to establish some sense of expectation about the behavior of others. These patterns can be built either based on direct exchange or through various forms of institutionalization. Trust in these accounts is a matter of decision making, that is, political actors decide to trust under certain circumstances, circumstances in which uncertainty is reduced through increased levels of transparency and/or increased levels of costs associated with the violation of trust. In these cases, trust appears as a strategic option, wilfully chosen and enacted by political actors under

certain circumstances. Within the calculative understanding of trust, two strands are identifiable. The first relies upon a rational actor model and posits trust as the outcome of an instrumental decision-making process. The other strand is more attentive to the interactionist dimension that underwrites the decisions to engage in trusting relationships; it emphasizes the extent to which every instance of trust necessitates a “leap of faith” and its analysis must include the recognition of a ‘human factor.’ Both strands, however, view trust as the outcome of a process of calculation in which the relation between opportunities and risks frame the event of trust.

Trust as Rational Decision Making

In this sub-strand of the calculative approach, trust is viewed as the outcome of an instrumentally rational decision-making process. Kydd 2000 and 2007 provide detailed and sophisticated accounts of a rational approach to trust formation. They note that, trust, mostly expressed in the form of cooperation, becomes possible as a strategic option if a situation arises in which the uncertainty about the intentions and motives of others has been reduced to the extent that a cooperative behavior is judged as generating net positive outcomes. For Kydd 2007, the reduction of uncertainty is achieved through updating beliefs about the trustworthiness of others, depending on whether states choose to cooperate or defect, while McGillivray and Smith 2000 locates the decrease of uncertainty in the issuance of threats or incentives, the invocation of which will shift the ground for rational action. Trust then occurs as a conscious choice of a rational decision maker under conditions in which the possible net gains of trustful behavior are judged to outweigh the risk of potential costs of defection.

Kydd, Andrew. “Trust, Reassurance, and Cooperation.” *International Organization* 54.4 (2000): 325–357.

In this article Kydd develops a theory of trust based on the role of reassurance and costly signaling as hallmarks of trustworthy states. Trustworthiness is evidence through behavior that includes risk-taking or the acceptance of vulnerability toward the other. States that send these signals can be deemed trustworthy; those that do not send them are untrustworthy.

Kydd then brings this theory to bear upon the end of the Cold War and an analysis of Soviet behavior under Gorbachev.

Kydd, Andrew. *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007. [ISBN: 9780691121703]

This is the seminal work within the rational-choice approach to trust analysis. Kydd provides an in-depth and concise conceptualization of trust, specifically regarding its contentious nature and function in relation to the security dilemma as the defining feature of international politics. This is followed by an erudite analysis of the role of mis(trust) and its effects in the international realm since 1945.

McGillivray, Fiona, and Alastair Smith. “Trust and Cooperation through Agent-Specific Punishments.” *International Organization* 54 (2000): 809–824.

This article examines the divide between domestic and international affairs that is often assumed and explores the role of punishments against political leaders (compared to collective punishments against a people more broadly) and the effects of punishment in achieving trust and cooperation. This focus centers on a conceptualization of the domestic accountability of leaders and the concomitant costs of their removal from power. The article shows how variations of accountability and costs of removal change trust and cooperative behavior in cases of agent-specific (i.e., leader-targeted) punishments.

Empirical Studies

Empirically, trust scholarship in instrumentally rational accounts are concerned largely in tracing the cost-benefit calculations that drive the decision-making processes of actors. In

many cases these reflections center on game theoretical accounts; they engage with political issues that involve potential high-level costs and considerable risks. Some scholars, in works such as Hayashi, et al. 1999, further differentiate between factors prevalent in particular societies, while others focus on general patterns of trust behavior and the boundary conditions of that behavior. Maoz and Felsenthal 1987 and Elhardt 2015 relate this to questions of cooperation in general, while Abbott 1993 outlines particular challenges, such as arms control.

Abbott, Kenneth W. *‘‘Trust but Verify’’: The Production of Information in Arms Control Treatises and Other International

Agreements[<http://scholarship.law.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1301&content=cilg>]*.” *Cornell International Law Journal* 26 (1993): 1–58.

This article deals with the way states create and exchange information as part of international agreements. Basing the study on a rationalist approach, specifically utilizing the ‘‘prisoner’s dilemma’’ and the ‘‘stag hunt,’’ Abbott investigates two strategies of information production—assurance and verification—with specific reference to arms control treatises. It explores the relation between the need for gathering information and the presence of trust and the judgment of trustworthiness of others.

Elhardt, Christoph. ‘‘The Casual Nexus between Trust, Institutions and Cooperation in International Relations.’’ *Journal of Trust Research* 5.1 (2015): 55–77.

This paper argues that trust-based responses to risk should receive more attention in scholarship on international cooperation. The author understands trust as a process of costly signaling. Specifically focusing on the causal connection among trust, cooperation, and institutions, and arguing that trust and institutions are complementary rather than oppositional, Elhardt analyzes Germany’s decision to give up the deutschmark in the process of creating a common European currency.

Hayashi, Nahoko, Elinor Ostrom, James Walker, and Toshio Yamagishi. ‘‘Reciprocity, Trust, and the Sense of Control: A Cross-Societal Study.’’ *Rationality and Society* 11.1 (1999): 27–46.

This article links the occurrence of reciprocal behavior under the conditions of a prisoner’s dilemma to two different factors: ‘‘general trust’’ and ‘‘sense of control.’’ While following a cognitive approach to trust, the article links reciprocal behavior to societal factors that may privilege general trust in some cases (the United States) and a sense of control in others (Japan). It highlights the centrality of societal characteristics in determining the role of trust in achieving reciprocal, cooperative outcomes.

Maoz, Zeev, and Dan S. Felsenthal. ‘‘Self-Binding Commitments, the Inducement of Trust, Social Choice, and the Theory of International Cooperation.’’ *International Studies Quarterly* 31.2 (1987): 177–200.

This article challenges the dominance of the ‘‘prisoner’s dilemma’’ and ‘‘chicken’’ games to conceptualize problems of trust in international politics. It introduces a broader range of asymmetric game-theoretic setups. Based on these scenarios the article develops the notion of self-binding commitment as a strategy of the dominant actor in asymmetric interactions. Its key claims about the emergence of trust are exemplified by looking at the peace initiative of President Sadat of Egypt in 1977–1979 and Israel’s withdrawal from Lebanon in 1985.

Trust as Mode of Interaction

The first sustained critique in the field of international relations of both the dismissal of trust as a factor in international politics and the rational choice approach emphasized the human dimension in the analysis of trust, a factor that was, so far, missing. Booth and Wheeler 2008 is a central contribution that criticizes the rational choice approach that acknowledges a role

for trust in international politics but also reduces the phenomenon to a function of purely rational decision making. The actors under scrutiny were taken to be mono-dimensional, functionally exchangeable decision makers reacting to outside stimuli. Trust emerged as a consequence of a shift toward a state of affairs in which the weighing of costs and benefits favors cooperative rather than conflictual behavior. Wheeler 2013 argues in relation to diplomatic transformations that what is overlooked in these accounts, however, is the central role of human behavior and human relationships. Mogensen 2015 shows that trust, according to an interactive approach, is vitally dependent upon the continued social interaction and the concomitant development of social bonds between actors. As a consequence, scholars working within this strand emphasize the central input of the “human factor” in the development and maintenance of trust relationships. Thus, they move away from rational choice approaches, which reduce the role of actors. However, they continue to agree with those who advance a rational choice approach that trust is both a wilful, calculated behavior, as can be seen, for instance, in Leach and Sabatier 2005 and Kelman 2005, and a specific strategy to respond to and manage uncertainty in international politics, as Welch Larson 1997 maintains.

Booth, Ken, and Nicholas J. Wheeler. *The Security Dilemma: Fear, Cooperation and Trust in World Politics*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. [ISBN: 9780333587447]

Booth and Wheeler provide one of the first sustained critiques of the traditional notion of the security dilemma and its conception of a “rational” notion, role, and function of trust. Instead, they highlight the emotive element, or the “human factor,” in instances of trusting. They outline the importance of a “leap of in the dark,” the crucial role of empathy and bonding as well as the acceptance of vulnerability in cases of trust.

Kelman, Herbert C. “Building Trust among Enemies: The Central Challenge for International Conflict Resolution.” *International Journal for Intercultural Relations* 29.6 (2005): 639–650.

This article investigates the challenges of trust-building and offers specific strategies that parties can take to overcome mistrust and achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. Starting from the dilemma that the beginning of peace processes requires trust but trust cannot develop outside these processes, the article suggests an approach based on small steps, or successive approximations, that utilize five strategic elements centered on responsiveness and reciprocity, which can help increase assurance under conditions of uncertainty.

Leach, William D., and Paul A. Sabatier. “To Trust an Adversary: Integrating Rational and Psychological Models of Collaborative Policymaking.” *American Political Science Review* 99.4 (2005): 491–503.

This article assesses the impact of the structure of negotiating processes in bringing about trust and cooperative outcomes. The emphasis lies with the integration of rational choice and psychological research to achieve a more accurate understanding of outcomes of negotiations. The findings demonstrate the central relevance of social-psychological factors in explaining the outcomes of negotiations and the fruitfulness of a multi-perspectival approach to trust.

Mogensen, Kirsten. “International Trust and Public Diplomacy.” *International Communication Gazette* 77.4 (2015): 315–336.

This article is concerned with the emergence of trust through public diplomacy. By investigating four examples of public diplomacy, Mogensen explores the effect of a number of initiatives on the emergence of trust. Recognizing the increasing importance of public opinion on decision-making processes, Mogensen argues that public diplomacy is, among the often-cited factors in trust-building such as institutions, shared norms and values, or past interactions, a key factor in the emergence of trust on an international level.

Welch Larson, Deborah. "Trust and Missed Opportunities in International Relations." *Political Psychology* 18.3 (1997): 701–734.

This article argues that for any cooperative behavior, especially in the area of security, some measure of trust is necessary. The author is particularly interested in occurrences in which an agreement, despite being a preferred outcome, was not realized, that is, a missed opportunity. The lack of trust that prevented such an agreement from being reached is traced in relation to rational decision making, domestic politics, and social psychology. The article also explores options on how to overcome distrust and reduce the number of "missed opportunities."

Wheeler, Nicholas J. "Investigating Diplomatic Transformations." *International Affairs* 89.2 (2013): 477–496.

This article traces diplomatic transformations based on the development of trust between antagonistic actors in the international realm. Analyzing the changing relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union under Reagan and Gorbachev, Wheeler proposes that approaches to conflict transformation so far have overlooked the crucial role of empathetic attitudes and trust-building motives in the communicative encounters between top-level leaders in the international realm.

Empirical Studies

Themes similar to rational-choice approaches to trust characterize empirical studies. In many cases they harken back to the continuing challenges emerging out of the security dilemma and related security issues. Wheeler [2009](#), Wheeler [2010](#), Ruzicka and Wheeler [2010a](#), and Ruzicka and Wheeler [2010b](#) pay particular attention to the question of nuclear proliferation, while Fierke [2009](#) and Hosking [2009](#) address the role of trust in relation to terrorism. This scholarship, however, is not restricted to security matters, as Weinhardt [2015](#) shows in its treatment of trust in North-South trade negotiations, and Oelsner [2007](#) demonstrates in treating the emergence of regional peace initiatives.

Fierke, Karin M. "Terrorism and Trust in Northern Ireland." *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 2.3 (2009): 497–511.

This article explores the role of trust as a response to uncertainty with specific reference to terrorism and the case of Northern Ireland. The article focuses on the relational dimension of trust development and the role of identity construction(s). The challenge for building trust is linked to the various way in which group identities are constructed and narrated and the manner in which these constructions feed into perceptions of uncertainty and an expectation of harm.

Hosking, Geoffrey. "Terrorism and Trust." *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 2.3 (2009): 482–496.

Hosking investigates the possibility of developing trust in response to challenges such as terrorism or widespread war. Trust results from the actions of leaders and their relationship to each other as well as a commitment to a common goal. Trust emerges out of an iterative process relying on institutions and symbolic systems to manage the uncertainty of the international system. The article uses France, Germany, the United States, and the Soviet Union as empirical examples.

Oelsner, Andrea. "Friendship, Mutual Trust and the Evolution of Regional Peace in the International System." *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 10.2 (2007): 257–279.

This article argues that constructing trust allows for more stable and lasting relationships and can transform situations of negative peace (i.e., the absence of hostilities) into situations of positive peace that exhibit central features of friendship. The article links the emergence of trusting relations to processes of securitization and de-securitization in which

the successful completion of the latter allows for the formation of regionally stable arrangements characterized by mutual trust and positive peace.

Ruzicka, Jan, and Nicholas J. Wheeler. "Decisions to Trust: Maintaining the Nuclear Non-proliferation Regime." *RUSI Journal* 155.2 (2010a): 20–25.

This short article discusses the centrality of trust and trustworthiness in the emergence and maintenance of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. It highlights the relational dynamics of judgments surrounding the trustworthiness of others that develop through continued interaction and argues that reducing trust to mere strategic calculation reduces its complexity and underestimates its influence in the policies pursued by regimes.

Ruzicka, Jan, and Nicholas J. Wheeler. "The Puzzle of Trusting Relationships in the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty." *International Affairs* 86.1 (2010b): 69–85.

This article investigates the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as an instance of trusting behavior. Trust is seen as an initial leap of faith, the subsequent strengthening or weakening of which depends on future interactions among the current and future parties involved. In the case of the treaty the article argues that a decrease of trust over time can be observed, and the authors examine different routes and possibilities to rebuild trust.

Weinhardt, Clara. "Relational Trust in International Cooperation: The Case of North-South Trade Negotiations." *Journal of Trust Research* 5.1 (2015): 27–54.

This article provides a critique of instrumentally rational notions of trust in investigating the influence of identities of self and other in relation to cooperative behavior and the presence and absence of trust. Weinhardt develops her notion of "relational trust" as tied to expectations of the other's behavior based on conceptions of identity that facilitate or hinder the development of trust and cooperation.

Wheeler, Nicholas J. "Beyond Waltz's Nuclear World: More Trust May Be Better." *International Relations* 23 (2009): 428–445.

This article directly responds to the argument made by Waltz that more nuclear weapons are better as deterrence based on rational decision making will ensure peaceful behavior due to the cost associated with noncompliant behavior. Instead, Wheeler argues that the emergence of security communities built around trust relationships that include taking risks and the acceptance of vulnerability will provide a much more stable prospect under continued condition of uncertainty. The article explores this proposition with reference to the relationship between Brazil and Argentina.

Wheeler, Nicholas J. "I Had Gone to Lahore with a Message of Goodwill but in Return We Got Kargil': The Promise and Perils of 'Leaps of Trust' in India-Pakistan Relations.'" *India Review* 9.3 (2010): 319–344.

This article treats the notion of a "leap in the dark" as a central component in every trust-building exercise. The article introduces two courses of action that can initiate trust-building under uncertainty: a step-by-step approach and a unilateral leap of trust. It specifically looks at Indian prime minister Vajpayee and his "leap of trust," an action that proved unsuccessful due to the subsequent actions by Pakistan.

NON-CALCULATIVE CONCEPTIONS OF TRUST

The second broad strand of trust research in international relations links the occurrence of trust to more agent-based elements that establish a propensity (or lack thereof) for trusting behavior. Contrary to both rational choice and social interactionist accounts of trust, these approaches see trust in more ontological terms. The occurrence of trust is understood as a form of human behavior designed to cope with an existential, not just a knowledge-related, form of uncertainty. In many cases, it is nondirectional, that is, it describes a general relationality on the basis of which people engage with the world. Crucially, the relation between trust and rationality appears in a more complex manner and the question whether we

can “decide” to trust is seen as much more problematic. Whereas calculative approaches conceive of trust as an outcome of a specific process of reasoning within a given framework of risks and opportunities, the second set of approaches conceptualize trust as a mixture of non-articulate disposition, emotive attitude, and a set of beliefs. The differentiation between these three elements must not be read as being mutually exclusive. Rather, non-calculative approaches in trust scholarship often invoke one or more of these elements in complementary fashion—the heuristic distinction provided here is a matter of emphasis rather than absolute and distinct spheres. On this basis, this section is divided into accounts that either emphasize *Trust as Dispositional Belief*, on the one hand, or *Trust as Emotive Attitude*, on the other. The basis for the non-calculative understanding of trust developed in the wake of scholarship regarding the relationship among rationality, psychology, and emotion. Specifically, Mercer 2005 and Mercer 2010 contribute to the dismantling of boundaries that ascribed to psychology and emotion distinct and purely negative connotations in relation to the political realm. In the same vein, trust in this understanding is also often conceptualized as non-cognitive in origin, as Becker 1996 and Rathbun 2012 exemplify. Uslander 2002 adds to these positions the deeply moralistic nature of generalized trust related to an optimistic view of the world that impacts on specific decision-making processes.

Baier, Annette C. *Moral Prejudices: Essays on Ethics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995. [ISBN: 9780674587168]

In chapters 6–9 this book offers one of the most influential and comprehensive discussions of trust. Baier argues that trust is fundamentally different from cases of reliance; trust cannot be decided upon but depends on an acceptance of vulnerability and a judgment and expectation of the goodwill of others. It is essential to differentiate trust from cases of reliance in which the other party is externally prevented from harming us (e.g., through expected punishment).

Becker, Lawrence. “Trust as Noncognitive Security about Motives.” *Ethics* 107.1 (1996): 43–61.

This article provides a nuanced exploration of the non-cognitive elements of trust. Non-cognitive trust is understood as a set of nondirectional affects, emotions, attitudes, or beliefs. On this basis, the article distinguishes among three forms of non-cognitive trust—credulity, reliance, and security—and outlines its key features and components in contrast to cognitive conceptualizations.

Mercer, Jonathan. “Rationality and Psychology in International Relations.” *International Organization* 59.1 (2005): 77–106.

This article challenges the prevailing dichotomy between “rational” and “psychological” approaches in international politics. Against the often-assumed negative influence of individual psychological factors, the article addresses three biases against psychology: psychology is independent from rationality, psychology requires a rational baseline, and psychology cannot explain accurate judgments. On the basis of this critique, the article conceptualizes trust as an emotional belief central to the solution of collective action problems.

Mercer, Jonathan. “Emotional Beliefs.” *International Organization* 64.1 (2010): 1–31.

This contribution provides an elaboration of the role of emotional beliefs and their relation to rationality in international relations. With frequent references to trust as an emotional belief, Mercer argues against the prejudiced understanding that emotional beliefs are irrational and detrimental to decision making in political affairs. The author demonstrates that it is not possible to understand central elements of political interaction, such as “credibility” and “persuasion,” without reference to emotion.

Rathbun, Brian C. "From Vicious to Virtuous Circle: Moralistic Trust, Diffuse Reciprocity, and the American Security Commitment to Europe." *European Journal of International Relations* 18.2 (2012): 323–344.

This article discusses the roots of multilateral commitments and introduces the central role of moralistic trust as a key factor underwriting the emergence of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Shifting ground from more sociological to more psychological accounts of cooperative behavior, Rathbun establishes moralistic trust as a generalized, non-articulate disposition that is instrumental in the creation of a shared identity.

Uslaner, Eric M. *The Moral Foundations of Trust*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002. [ISBN: 9780521011037]

This volume provides a comprehensive and detailed discussion of trust as being deeply moralistic, as opposed to strategic, in nature. Uslaner conceptualizes trust as a nondirectional disposition arising out of a positive view of the world in general. Uslander goes on to emphasize this assertion in introducing the notions of particularized trust, on the one hand, and generalized trust, on the other. Based on these conceptualizations, Uslaner traces the levels of trust in the United States over a period of thirty years.

Trust as Dispositional Belief

One strand that perceives of trust as a non-calculative mode of behavior focuses on trust as a dispositional belief, as in Pettit 1995, or as in Hoffman 2002, a set of beliefs in order to explain outcomes in international politics. Here different forms of trust are linked to social orientations that prescribe different modes of trust and trusting. Contrary to the calculative accounts in which trust is an outcome of a specific structural or social context in which decision makers assume a trustful attitude under certain conditions, trust in dispositional accounts is seen as providing prefigurations (or a heuristic framework) that precede decision making. Rathbun 2009 and Rathbun 2012 are highly influential works; the author's empirical focus on multilateralism demonstrates the central role of "moralistic trust" as a non-articulate factor underwriting cooperative behavior. A similar conception is found in Rengger 1997. In this subset of non-calculative approaches, prominent discussions revolve around specific consequences of such a notion of trust both for the study of politics and for our conceptual understanding of the role of trust in human existence. For instance, Holton 1994 focuses on the question of the relation between trust and decision making, while Hardin 1993 questions its relation to rationality.

Hardin, Russell. "The Street-Level Epistemology of Trust." *Politics & Society* 21 (1993): 505–529.

Hardin argues that a broader set of beliefs about the trustworthiness of others must supplement rational conceptions of trust. These beliefs emerge out of past experiences that condition future expectations about the behavior of others. Complementary to rationalist conceptions of trust, the article argues for the relevance of wider sets of beliefs, and it these beliefs on which the horizon of rationality and, thereby, the limits of trust are constituted.

Hoffman, Aaron M. "A Conceptualization of Trust in International Relations." *European Journal of International Relations* 8.3 (2002): 375–401.

Hoffman seeks to provide new insights into how and why trustful interstate relations develop and how these relationships can be empirically observed. Conceptually, the article conceives of trust as emerging out of a set of beliefs that the respective other will honor. The article goes on to suggest three specific indicators that could be used to measure trust in the international arena: discretion-granting policies and decision-making data, oversight indicators, and rule indicators.

Holton, Richard. "Deciding to Trust, Coming to Believe." *Australian Journal of Philosophy* 72.4 (1994): 63–76.

Similar to Wright 2010, this article argues that cases of trust require a participant stance in which the trustor assumes a specific state of mind or attitude toward the trustee. The article connects the occurrence of trust to both “belief” and “will.” It discusses in detail not only the nature of trust, but also on its distinction from cases of reliance and its relation to the notions of belief and will.

Pettit, Philip. “The Cunning of Trust.” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 24 (1995): 202–225.

This article conceptualizes trust as a form of belief and investigates the main reasons why trust occurs. It explores two conditions under which trust mainly occurs: the trustworthiness of others through loyalty, virtue, or prudence and trust-responsiveness as regard-seeking. The article concludes with considerations about the (institutional) conditions under which trust-responsiveness can actually arise.

Rathbun, Brian C. “It Takes All Types: Social Psychology, Trust, and the International Relations Paradigm in Our Minds.” *International Theory* 1.3 (2009): 345–380.

In this article, Rathbun explores the benefits and promises for IR theory of a more sustained engagement with social psychology. Similar to Mercer, he criticizes the lack of socio-psychological insights specifically in relation to the role and function of trust in international relations. He demonstrates how such insights allow for a differentiated understanding of trust rooted in individual dispositions that can help grasp diverging responses in the same strategic environment.

Rathbun, Brian C. *Trust in International Cooperation: International Security Institutions, Domestic Politics, and America Multilateralism*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012. [ISBN: 9781107014718]

This book develops trust as central to international cooperation and the emergence of international institutions. Rathbun criticizes strategic or rational conceptions of trust and, instead argues, following Uslaner 2002 (cited under *Non-calculative Conceptions of Trust*), that trust precedes and informs calculated decision-making processes by forming a specific disposition with which we relate to the world. He demonstrates how the development of different security institutions throughout the 20th century depend on the presence of generalized trust.

Rengger, Nicholas. “The Ethics of Trust in World Politics.” *International Affairs* 73.3 (1997): 469–487.

This article explores the “presumption of trust” that is present in the international sphere. Identifying the presence of such trust via the considerable degree of rule-governed behavior that conditions the decisions of international actors, Rengger considers the importance of trust as a habitual, nonconscious disposition. He observes, however, that trust-based practices become increasingly precarious due to both structural and agential complexities in contemporary world politics, and he discusses the consequences of this development.

Wright, Stephen. “Trust and Trustworthiness.” *Philosophia* 38.3 (2010): 615–627.

Wright conceives of trust as resulting from the trustor feeling gratified by the actions of the trustee. This “participant stance” is conceptualized as a stance without expectations about how the trustee will behave, meaning that goodwill is not necessary for instances of trust. Therefore, trust and reliance, in both negative and positive cases, lead to different experiences: trust is tied to gratification and betrayal while reliance is tied to satisfaction and disappointment.

Empirical Studies

Empirical studies that highlight the role of trust as a non-articulate disposition demonstrate very similar concerns as those undertaken by scholars who adopt calculative approaches. However, trust is here a background condition that influences the decision making of actors rather than a mere strategy that actors choose to pursue, as for instance in the case of

Canadian non-acquisition of nuclear weapons, a topic explored in Urban [2014](#). Rathbun [2010](#) and Rathbun [2011](#) demonstrate how trust as a general disposition toward the world provides the backdrop against which conscious decision making needs to be understood. Brugger, et al. [2013](#) and Brugger 2015 provide reflections on the methodological toolset that can track and demonstrate trust as a disposition, and they explore the relation of dispositional trust to notions of control and policy integration. Gralnick [1988](#) and Endress and Papst 2013 provide further considerations on dispositional trust, specifically on a societal level in response to possible nuclear war or traumatic violence.

Brugger, Philipp. "Trust as a Discourse: Concept and Measurement Strategy; First Results from a Study on German Trust in the USA." In *Special Issue: Trust in International Relations: A Useful Tool?* Edited by Hiski Haukkala, Johanna Vuorelma, and Carina van de Wetering. *Journal of Trust Research* 5.1 (2015): 78–100.

This article develops a methodological approach to the measurement of trust as a specific positive bias or disposition toward the expected behavior of others. It seeks to measure the presence of trust and its influence by tracing images of the other through a content analytical approach with reference to trust in Germany in the United States. This article is specifically useful as it provides a specific methodological approach to identify non-calculative notions to trust.

Brugger, Philipp, Lukas Kasten, and Andreas Hasenclever. "Theorizing the Impact of Trust on Post-Agreement Negotiations: The Case of Franco-German Security Negotiations." *International Negotiation* 18.3 (2013): 441–469.

Starting from a conception of trust as a dispositional, positive bias, this article provides a detailed discussion of the relation with trust and notions of control and policy integration. The article considers the effects of the absence and presence of trust during crises and the subsequent negotiations about security regimes. It concludes that varying levels of trust have a significant effect on the way states perceive crises and engage in security regime building.

Endress, Martin, and Andrea Pabst. "Violence and Shattered Trust: Sociological Considerations." *Human Studies* 36.1 (2013): 89–106.

This article explores the effect of the destruction of trust through traumatic violence. Conceptually, the authors distinguish between three modes of trust: basic, habitual, and reflexive. It specifically focuses on basic trust as the most fundamental, ontologically grounded, that is, non-cognitive, mode of trust as an indispensable resource for social action. The article discusses the effects of traumatic violence and its implications for the ability of victims to interact socially and with regard to their central dependence on basic trust.

Gralnick, Alexander. "Trust, Deterrence, Realism, and Nuclear Omnicide." *Political Psychology* 9.1 (1988): 175–188.

This article, written in the context of the Cold War, addresses the need for trust in order to overcome the uncertainties and instabilities of nuclear deterrence. Gralnick sees trust as the key to creating an atmosphere in which cooperative and reciprocal behavior is possible. Gralnick situates this need for trust on the societal level in portraying it as rooted in a set of beliefs that structure the opinions dominant in society; only a change in these beliefs will bring about the opportunity to trust.

Rathbun, Brian C. "The 'Magnificent Fraud': Trust, International Cooperation, and the Hidden Domestic Politics of American Multilateralism after World War II." *International Studies Quarterly* 55.1 (2010): 1–21.

Specifically criticizing overly structural accounts of the trajectory of US foreign policy after World War II, Rathbun demonstrates that divergent dispositions of trust among Democrats and Republicans had a major impact in the debates about unilateralism versus

multilateralism. The notion of trust developed here exceeds the strategic aspect of trusting and highlights the central role of trust as a generalized disposition toward others who hold differing viewpoints across the political left and right.

Rathbun, Brian C. "Before Hegemony: Generalised Trust and the Creation and Design of International Security Organizations." *International Organization* 65.2 (2011): 243–273. Following Uslaner 2002 (cited under *Non-calculative Conceptions of Trust*), this article traces the central importance and consequences of generalized trust as a general disposition that creates ontological horizons of expectations. The article traces the influence and importance of generalized trust as a dispositional belief in the creation of the League of Nations and the United Nations. Crucially, and contrary to calculative approaches, it argues that (generalized) trust precedes processes of institutionalization rather than emerging out of them.

Urban, Michael Crawford. "The Curious Tale of the Dog That Did Not Bark: Explaining Canada's Non-acquisition of an Independent Nuclear Arsenal, 1945–1957." *International Journal* 69.3 (2014): 308–333.

This article develops a notion of trust as reasonable belief that derives from both rational and nonrational sources and entails the acceptance of vulnerability as a feature of interaction with others. By identifying the presence of five factors that enable trust (interactivity, homogeneity, common interests, shared experiences, and altercasting), Urban provides an empirical application of this notion of trust by analyzing its role in the Canadian decision to forgo the acquisition of nuclear weapons.

Trust as Emotive Attitude

The second strand within a non-calculative understanding of trust conceives of trust as an emotional attitude. For Lahno 2001 trust is emotive and as such not directly subsumable under a pre-given notion of rationality. Rather, trust describes an emotive horizon of expectation through which actors relate to the world around them. Often, as in Michel 2013, these accounts of trust also suggest a narrower, more restricted understanding of trust as related to other human beings only. Barbalet 2009 and Jones 1996 point out that rational or strategic instances of risk-taking need to be conceptually differentiated from instances of trust. The former is often understood in terms of "reliance" as strategic risk-taking based on instrumentally rational decision making. This behavior is closely linked if not fully congruent to the cognitive approaches to trust outlined in *Trust as Rational Decision Making* as it constitutes a specific form of behavior in response to epistemological uncertainty. Trust as an emotive attitude, on the other hand, is perceived more as a form of coping with ontological uncertainty characteristic of human existence.

Barbalet, Jack. "A Characterization of Trust, and Its Consequences." *Theory and Society* 38.4 (2009): 367–382.

The article offers a nuanced and detailed consideration of the different dimensions of trust by highlighting three intersecting elements in cases of trust: the acceptance of dependency, the lack of reliable information about the other, and the pursuit of an objective otherwise not realizable. Based on these elements, Barbalet characterizes trust as an emotive expression of confidence. The article further delivers reflections on the relationship between trust and social capital and the connection between trust and rationality.

Jones, Karen. "Trust as an Affective Attitude." *Ethics* 107.1 (1996): 4–25.

This article offers a conception of trust as emotive attitude that expresses a sense of optimism coupled with expectations of goodwill on the part of the person trusted. As such, Jones is critical of calculative approaches to trust but she also disagrees with accounts that conceptualize trust as a form of belief rather than affect. She draws a clear distinction

between cases of trust and reliance and closes with reflections on the conditions under which trust is justified.

Lahno, Bernd. "On the Emotional Character of Trust." *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 4.2 (2001): 171–189.

This article argues that trust rests on an emotive basis and, as such, precedes and frames notions of rationality. The emotive basis of trust conditions perceptions of the world and others within it, and action is undertaken based on these perceptions. The article explores the consequences of understanding trust as an emotive attitude. Lahno specifically considers how trust differs from reliance and its relationship to rationality and context.

Michel, Torsten. "Time to Get Emotional. Phronetic Reflections of the Concept of Trust in International Relations." *European Journal of International Relations* 19.4 (2013): 869–890.

This article argues that research on trust in international relations has so far failed to take the emotive component of trust sufficiently into account. Providing an initial critique against the cognitive as well as dispositional approaches to trust, Michel argues that these approaches conflate different phenomena, specifically trust and reliance. Whereas reliance is the outcome of cognitive processes for which a decision can be made, trust is an emotive attitude that precedes perceptions of rationality by providing a horizon of expectation in which these develop.